

## STARVES TO SAVE FOR SHOES! — ONE WHO MUST TELL HOW IT FEELS

New York, Dec. 31. — For three days I had been seeking in factory lofts and up dark tenement stairs for a girl who could tell me how it is possible to live in the capital of western luxury on a weekly income of \$4.

I knew that such girls exist because Mary Van Kleeck of the Russell Sage Foundation had testified before the state factory commission that there were 6,000 young women in the millinery business in New York city who earn an average of \$8 a week for six months in the year and are unemployed the other six months, thus reducing their average weekly earnings to a pitiful \$4.

In a two-room tenement in McDougal st., in the heart of New York's Italian quarter, I found the girl I was looking for.

She is Maria Aquilino, a dark-eyed young woman from northern Italy, who, in the four years since she left her native city of Biella in Piedmont, has known only poverty, cold and hunger.

Fifth av. was thronged with holiday makers when I hunted for Maria Aquilino. About the avenue's base, in the Italian quarters, girl toilers at \$4 a week were sewing their youth and strength, beauty and faith, into garments they may never hope to wear.

These were the lucky daughters of the poor! For they at least had work, and my friend, Maria Aquilino, was not among them. She had lost her job in a ready-to-wear hat factory the day before Thanksgiving, and when I found her she was attempting to keep the wolf from the door by stenciling on gaily colored cards the ironic legend: "And the angel said, 'Peace on earth; good will to men.'"

She had found this home work to do but she knew that the new occupation was even more brief than that

of placing gaudy birds and glittering flowers on women's hats.

"Yes, I live on \$4 a week," she said when I had explained my errand. "I live on \$4 a week—when I have the \$4. And I am better off than most of the girls I know, because I share these two rooms with my friend, Regina. Regina is very lucky. She will have work for a month yet. Our rent for this top rear tenement is \$10.50 a month," she explained.

"For the two of us it costs \$5 a week, except when we have to buy shoes or a dress or a coat. Then we make it less by not having meat. We agree that we shall not eat meat, say, for two or three weeks, except on Sundays. We do our own washing on Sunday mornings, because there is no other time. We have found that to live here costs us \$3.67 a week apiece.

"If I could have work all the time I should not have to worry," Maria added. "But in millinery that is not possible. In May, June and July I had work as a trimmer at \$11 a week, working nine hours a day. In August, September and October I had only six weeks' work in all. Then I worked in a ready-to-wear hat factory and they paid me \$10. In November I worked one week at \$9.

"Now, as you see, I make these picture cards for a late order. But that will not last, and after that there will be no work in millinery for three months. Now, I will show you what I have spent for clothes this year—\$26 for two dresses and this black sateen waist, three pairs of shoes, two pairs of rubbers and two hats that I trimmed myself.

"This year my grandmother died and when her little farm near Biella was sold I got \$100 and some of her old clothes. By making these over I need not spend anything on myself for a long time. They are old and